



Tall jug by Nic Collins. Ht: 62 cm (24½ in.).

Chapter 5

Throwing a tall jug

To centre a large amount of clay can be a real problem for most potters. One method for solving the problem is to use two pieces of clay, each one being the weight of clay that you can manage comfortably. So perhaps weigh out two times 3.5 kg (7½ lb), making sure to prepare the clay to be used by kneading thoroughly. Take one of the pieces of clay and beat it into a pear-shaped lump of clay by holding it in your left hand and beating it with the palm of your right hand. Each time slowly rotate the clay in a clockwise direction, then turn the clay upside down and repeat the process. You should now be left with a pear shape with a nicely rounded bottom to it. Repeat this with the other piece of clay. Now take one of the prepared pieces and place it as centred as possible on the wheel head. With the wheel revolving at a slow speed you can now gently beat the clay with both hands in a downward manner to centre it further. The second 3.5 kg (7½ lb) weight of clay can now be placed on top of the first piece, with the nicely rounded base sitting on the pointed part of the first section.

As with the first piece of clay, with the wheel revolving slowly beat gently with both hands in a downward direction. Great care must be taken not to trap any air, although this is unlikely if the two pieces of clay are the shape suggested, as this will expel the air rather than trap it. Most of the hard work of centring should



1 Beating first lump of clay into centre.



2 Placing second lump of clay.

now be complete and just finer centring in the usual manner can now take place.

Throwing a tall cylinder will take all the skills of the potter and can only be done with a good throwing clay. Once



3 Opening up.

the clay is perfectly centred the base will need to be opened to the required width. Once opened up, the remaining clay is a lot thicker than usual. Great care must be taken to gently coax up the clay to thin out the walls. The temptation at this point is to try and lift this clay quickly, but in my experience you will only succeed in tearing the thick wall from the base of the jug.

With the finger of your left hand positioned on the bottom inside of the wall and the flat of your right hand on the outside it will be possible to gently thin the wall of the base. At this stage it will also be important to cone in the wall of the pot, making sure the clay is always fully in your control. As with all throwing it is good to lift the clay in as few actions as possible, as after a while the clay will become tired and will just want to sit back down. With the base collared in, the first lift can now be performed. Positioning the speed of the wheel at a medium-high speed can lift quite a large amount of clay. With the

fingers of your left hand on the inside of the wall and with the flat of your right hand on the bottom outside, you will find the clay easier to pull up. As you are nearing the top and the end of your first lift, ease off with the speed of the wheel and also the pressure of your hand. It is important when finishing a throwing movement to do it slowly and gently, allowing the clay to consolidate and also not knocking it off centre.

At this point, as with throwing any cylinder, the pot will need to be collared in.

With the cylinder under control it is now possible to repeat and perform the second lift, the only difference being, that the wheel speed will need to be slower and you will need to consider the final form of the pot being made. At this point, if the wheel speed is too fast, the torque at the base will be too great and the pot will ripple and eventually collapse. With my tall jugs, because they are so narrow I like to add some more clay in the form of a doughnut, as described in an earlier chapter (see p.XX).

The section described is now dried off with the gas torch. Firstly surplus water is taken out using a sponge attached to a long stick. When the base is firm enough, the doughnut of clay is attached with the wheel at a slow speed and with a downward pinching motion, to ensure that the clay is attached firmly. The doughnut can now be centred, hold the sponge on the outside of the piece, start at the bottom of the doughnut and, supported with the fingers of the left hand on the inside, apply slight pressure with the sponge. Once the base has been centred, simply move upward until the doughnut is completely centred. When centred the doughnut can be thrown into the final shape of the tall jug.



4 Lifting up.



5 Collaring in the clay.



6 Drying the jug base to be firm enough to support the next section.